

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE AND SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES  
UPSTAIRS MEETING ROOM, 1 AVENUE A, TURNERS FALLS, MA  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2019

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The Chair opens the meeting

- Meeting was opened at 6:00 PM in the Upstairs Meeting Room
- **Finance Committee members present:** John Hanold, Richard Widmer, Jen Audley, Chris Menegoni, and Michael Naughton. Fred Bowman and Greg Garrison were absent.
- **Montague Selectboard members present:** Chris Boutwell and Richard Kuklewicz. Michael Nelson arrived at 6:12 PM.
- **Franklin County Technical School (FCTS) representatives present:** Superintendent Richard Martin and Business Manager Russ Kaubris. Mr. Kuklewicz is the chairman of the FCTS School Committee.
- **Others present:** Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen and Town Planner and Conservation Agent Walter Ramsey. Town Administrator Steve Ellis was absent.
- The Chair announced that the meeting is being recorded by MCTV and asked if anyone else was recording the meeting. No one else was recording the meeting.

### Minutes

Finance Committee Moved:

To approve the minutes of February 20, 2019.

Vote:   5   In Favor                        0   Opposed                        0   Abstained

Selectboard Moved:

To approve the minutes of February 20, 2019.

Vote:   2   In Favor                        0   Opposed                        0   Abstained

### Planning Budget

Please see questions and answers at the end of the minutes.

Mr. Hanold noted that the main changes are this being the first full year of the cultural coordinator and the request for an intern in Fiscal Year 2020.

Additional discussion:

- The Cultural Coordinator has met the fundraising goals for the year and exceeded the expectations for outside grants received. Mr. Ramsey feels the workflow and outcomes have improved with it being a town position and with the oversight of the steering

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committee. Without this position, most of the cultural grants would not have been received, and there would have been fewer programs.

- The Cultural Coordinator provides the town with dedicated staff to pursue and implement grants and other opportunities.
- Mr. Widmer asked how we give more resources to the Cultural Coordinator, specifically additional hours. Mr. Ramsey said that more hours would lead to more programming, and if the community wants more, he would be happy to deliver more.
- Mr. Naughton asked if the intern would affect what the Cultural Coordinator is doing. Mr. Ramsey said it is more likely that the intern would help with what the Town Planner does. The intern would work on a wider variety of planning issues, outside of work of the Cultural Coordinator.
- Mr. Hanold asked where the intern would come from. The intern typically is a graduate student at UMass, but definitely one of the area colleges. The paid internship is for someone with a bachelor's degree in planning, actively working on graduate degree in planning. We get a high quality of work from graduate interns and they work on specific projects.
- Ms. Audley asked if there are things that weren't done this year because Mr. Ramsey was maxed out. Mr. Ramsey said that we had to forego \$40,000 from a Green Communities grant because time was running out, there were complications in the implementation, and there wasn't enough capacity in the office. Ms. Audley feels that the intern is a low cost, high impact way to help the department. Mr. Ramsey also noted that we have over \$800,000 currently requested in grant applications. The intern typically works for 15 hours a week for 4-6 months.
- Mr. Naughton asked if it's worth taking a step back. If we're missing out on opportunities because of lack of staff, is the best way to address this with interns or with another type of permanent position as a town employee. Mr. Ramsey said it's premature to make any proposals, and that it would also mean restructuring current positions.
- Mr. Hanold noted that there is some glamour in planning and the cultural coordinator position that doesn't exist in other departments such DPW grounds maintenance or a public health nurse. Mr. Hanold is cautious about adding new positions, especially if benefitted.
- Mr. Menegoni said he was hoping Mr. Ramsey was going to request a full-time Cultural Coordinator for Fiscal Year 2020 and hopes to see this request next year.
- Mr. Hanold asked why the Montague Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (MEDIC) still exists and why it has to be separate. Mr. Ramsey explained that MEDIC owns

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assets, specifically bank accounts and real estate (38 Avenue A). Having an EDIC is tool in planning. Mr. Ramsey noted that MEDIC is involved in the industrial park and enforcing covenants. MEDIC has eminent domain authority, and they can do things more quickly and efficiently than having to go through a town meeting or a town department.

- Mr. Ramsey feels that improving or replacing the sign at industrial park would be good project for MEDIC as they have jurisdiction over the park and were involved in the original sign. Mr. Ramsey also said that while the special article request was for \$7,500, he has received an estimate of \$5,888.

### **Final Revenue Estimates, Final Affordable Assessment**

- Director of Assessing Karen Tonelli has no revisions of the last projected new growth figure of \$426,326.
- Ms. Olsen reviewed all local estimated receipts and made some adjustments with a net increase of \$966.
- The current calculation of the Affordable Assessment is \$10,225,337 which is an increase of \$105,833 over the preliminary assessment of \$10,119,504 and an increase of \$414,217 or 4.22% above the Fiscal Year 2019 Affordable Assessment of \$9,811,16

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend a GMRSD Affordable Assessment of \$10,225,337 for Fiscal Year 2020.

Vote:   5   In Favor                        0   Opposed                        0   Abstained

Selectboard Moved:

To recommend a GMRSD Affordable Assessment of \$10,225,337 for Fiscal Year 2020.

Vote:   3   In Favor                        0   Opposed                        0   Abstained

### **Franklin County Technical School Budget and Assessment**

Superintendent Martin presented the proposed Fiscal Year 2020 budget and assessments. He and Mr. Kaubris noted the following points:

- After years of austerity and right-sizing the budget, there is now the capacity to grow the school back to 13 technical shop offerings.

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- The FCTS applied for a new Chapter 74 vocational technical program in Veterinary Sciences. This was recently approved, and the first class of freshmen students will enroll this fall.
- The FCTS serves more special education students on individual education plans (IEPs) than any other regional high school in Franklin County. Their 2 year average of these students was 38.5% compared to 17.7% for the other Franklin County regional high schools.
- The FCTS Advanced Placement program is the only vocational-technical school to be recognized by the AP District Honor Roll, and one of only 18 schools in the state.
- Total enrollment as of October 1, 2018 was 461, with 85 Montague students. Montague's net per pupil cost for Fiscal Year 2020 is \$12,414.
- The total proposed Fiscal Year 2020 budget is \$11,721,019, which includes \$237,419 for the first full payment on 15 year bonds, which paid for the window and door replacement project, roof repairs, and paving upgrades. The total budget increased by \$728,579, or \$491,160 net of debt service.
- The total of the proposed assessments for all 19 member towns increased 2.8% to \$6,167,075.
- Major revenue changes are the \$237,419 capital assessment to member towns, an increase of \$428,238 in Chapter 70 aid, a decrease of \$105,000 in tuition from non-member towns, an increase of \$25,000 in tuition from the pre-employment program, and a reduction of \$29,713 in use of Excess and Deficiency.
- Major expenditure changes are increases of \$150,000 in instructional services, \$67,000 for student transportation, \$39,000 in plant operations and maintenance, \$44,000 in retirement contributions, \$122,350 for employee and retiree insurance and the \$237,419 for long term debt payments.
- Superintendent Martin noted several recent accomplishments, including:
  - Coordinating with Erving to share a music teacher.
  - The school received a \$500,000 grant to renovate the welding shop with increased space and new equipment.

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- Another grant paid for a new collision repair paint hood to replace the old unsafe hood.
- Installation of LED sports light for fields using student labor.
- Superintendent Martin noted that the overall enrollment trend is that the school is getting back to where it was in 2015.
- Superintendent Martin looked at what schools Montague students came from to see if the district was recapturing residents who went out of district for grade school. He provided a chart showing this seems to be case. About 25% of 9<sup>th</sup> grade Montague residents came from out of district and of the total 85 Montague students for Fiscal Year 2019, only 53 came from the GMRSD, meaning that 32 (38%) came from out of district placements.
- Superintendent Martin is projecting there will be an additional 10 freshmen students (for a total of 38) from Montague next year, based on 45 applications and historical rates of actual acceptance and attendance. This will bring the total of Montague students to 109 for Fiscal Year 2021.
- Mr. Hanold asked about the jump in the amount of Excess and Deficiency (E&D) funds used for the budget last year and this year from the previous use of \$50,000. Mr. Kaubris explained that in the past they budgeted so tight they had very little E&D to use. They now make a practice of being conservative in budget estimates. Now if someone retires and are replaced at a lower salary, they continue to include the higher amount because it only takes a few years for an employee to reach the top step. This, and similar conservative budget practices builds E&D which is then used to reduce assessments. This practice is also used as a hedge in case of mid-year state revenue cuts.
- Superintendent Martin said that 65% of students in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade are in paid co-op positions. This used to be only 15%.
- Superintendent Martin noted that collaborative efforts with other districts include a new joint bid for transportation that includes service for the FCTS, GMRSD, Pioneer, Greenfield and Erving. He said this is phase I of the collaborative transportation plan. Phase II will include sharing a transportation coordinator to police routes and coordinate buses and pickups. This phase will also include staggering school starting times. The future goal is a community bus to serve all schools with students from same area.

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- Ms. Audley asked about the expense line for public relations. Mr. Kaubris said that this account pays for several stipends – webmaster, independent contractor who writes press releases or articles for publication, and social media roles.

**Airport Requests –**

Suggestions for inclusion in the report:

- Success in reducing taxation support.
- Purchased snow removal vehicle to generate savings
- Proposed solar array to generate saving.
- Becoming self-sufficient
- Thinking long term to improve revenue streams and reduce reliance on taxation
- Note decision to go ahead and hire an intern from the Tech School in spite of town meeting cutting their budget by that amount. The manager took a cut in hours to preserve the intern, and feels that having the intern was a big help. For Fiscal Year 2020, the request restores the manager's hours and increases the hours for an intern.

Mr. Menegoni said that he remains unconvinced that the airport is a real benefit to the town. He feels that tax dollars should not be used to support it. Others noted that the cost to close the airport would be large – in the millions of dollars. Mr. Naughton said that airports have been known to close, and he said the town should continue to keep an open mind.

**Schedules I & II –**

Suggestions for inclusion in the report:

- The Committee undertook a comprehensive evaluation of stipends and inspection fees. All were increased, some for the first time in many years. The Committee plans to keep stipends level for 5 years and will then re-evaluate
- Treatment of treasurer; advice of personnel board to phase in requested additional steps.

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- Increase of part-time ranges due to minimum wage increases

**Reconsideration of meeting dates and agendas** - none

**Topics not anticipated within in the 48 hour posting requirements** – none

**Next Meeting Date:** – March 6<sup>th</sup> to meet with the Board of Health, Parks and Recreation, Information Technology, review what to include in the Finance Committee Report regarding the Planning requests and FCTS, and review draft report to town meeting.

**Meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM**

**List of Documents and Exhibits:**

- Minutes of February 20, 2016
- Planning Questions and Answers

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**174- PLANNING AND RIVERCULTURE**

1. Please provide a current job description for the Cultural Coordinator position.

See separate document.

2. How has the committee structure that the Cultural Coordinator interacts with been working?

The Steering Committee structure and appointees were established by the Select Board in June 2018. It is made up of 9 individuals representing various creative industries in Montague. The committee has met 4 times with the Coordinator. The Committee has adopted an Annual Plan and Budget. Planner attended first two meetings to help develop the annual plan and facilitate the Committee's directives. The committee is scheduled to meet quarterly. It has been a) helpful for the Coordinator to have a committee to help steer the direction of the program. And b) most helpful for the steering committee to make sure their various constituencies are benefitting from the public service offered by RC. RC has solidified its partnership with the Shea Theater. The Coordinator was made an ex-official member of the Shea Board. This ensures close coordination between the Shea and the Cultural District and allows each entity to leverage the work of each other.

3. What grants or other monies has the Cultural Coordinator brought to the town so far, and what are expected in the future?

The Cultural Coordinator has brought between \$72,545 and \$87,545 to the Town of Montague in FY2019 which represents funds raised from sponsors, program income, grants, and in-kind donations resulting from programming partnerships. The Cultural Coordinator is optimistic that funding will continue to increase as she is able to strategize a long term plan to find new business sponsors, generate income, attract programming partners, and apply for larger grants.

FY2019 SPONSORSHIP, \$12,800

Current sponsors:

Judd Wire (\$4000), Republic Services (\$3500), Greenfield Savings (\$1400), Greenfield Coop Bank (\$1400)

\*New Sponsor: NorthEast Solar Design, \$2500. (8/18)

INCOME, \$1245

\*River Valley Ice Cream Ride: \$750 (8/18)

\*other programming income: \$495

GRANTS AWARDS, \$20,500-\$35,500

\*MCC YouthReach Grant: \$15,000 for 3 years awarded to the Brick House. RiverCulture brought this grant opportunity to the director and provided input in the application process. (8/18)

\*Mass Cultural Council FY219 Cultural District Grant: \$5,000 (11/18)

\*Mass Cultural Council Festival Grant: \$500 (11/18)

\*Dhed Technical Assistance Grant: \$15,000 for a Millers Falls Creative Placemaking Plan (submitted)

FY2019 IN KIND PARTNESHIP INVESTMENT, \$38,000



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- \*Nolumbeka Project: Pocumtuck Homelands Festival, August 2018, \$10,000 investment
- \*FCCC: Franklin County Cider Days, November 2018, \$8,000 investment
- \*Human Error Publishing: Great Falls Word Festival, November 2018, \$2,000 investment
- \*3 Village "Vitality Study Survey" with UMASS phd student John Delconte, February-March 2019, \$10,000 investment
- \*Eggtooth Productions: Radical Interconnectedness Festival, April 2019, \$8,000 investment

4. What are the other accomplishments of the Cultural Coordinator so far, and what are expected in the future?

In fiscal year 2019, the Cultural Coordinator has helped to produce the following events: The River Valley Ice Cream Ride, Pocumtuck Homelands Festival, Fairy House Day, Unity Park Night Skate events, Paperjam events, Fab Fashion Passion, Great Falls Word Festival, Cider Days, The Migration Festival, and It's A Wonderful Night in Turners Falls. Additionally, the Cultural Coordinator published seasonal calendars, highlighting all of the arts related events happening in Montague.

On October 1, 2018 Suzanne LoManto represented the Town of Montague at the Downtown Summit Conference sponsored by the Mass Department of Housing and Community Development. Suzanne received high praise for her presentation "What We Learned in the Turners Falls Cultural District" offered in the session "Economic Development through Arts, Culture, Recreation and Entertainment." The Town of Montague receives regular attention from the Commonwealth as a small community on the forefront of economic development through the Arts.

RiverCutlure was able to fundraise to increase the Montague Cultural Council's local grant awarding capacity by 40%.

In FY20 we are looking to roll out the following new efforts:

- an exciting and innovative new program to support development and retention of artist studios by sponsoring workshops at participating studios.
- Fundraising efforts to repair the Montague Center Wayfinding Marker and the Spinner Park Statue
- \$15,000 DHCD grant for a Placemaking plan for Millers Falls

5. What progress has been made on the Outputs and Outcomes as outlined in the "Inputs, Outputs, and Outcomes FY2019" document? How are these things measured?

We are 7 months into the newly reconfigured program. We are pleased to report that virtually all of the Outputs are being accomplished or are otherwise in progress or planning stages. On a purely anecdotal level we are confident that the desired outcomes are being achieved. However, at this stage it is premature to measure outcomes. The Cultural Coordinator regularly discusses the broader, more far reaching RiverCulture programming mission with the Town Planner (weekly) and with the Steering Committee about 4 times a year. The next Steering Committee is in February.

In attempt to secure good measureable results for the program the Cultural Coordinator is working with a PhD graduate student from the UMASS Department of Landscape Architecture

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and Regional Planning, to implement a survey of "Vitality" in town. The survey measures ideas like creativity, activity, infrastructure, well-being, and attentive governance on a scale, 1-5. This information could serve as a tool for future grant writing and redevelopment projects in addition to a measurement for effectiveness of the program.

6. Has RiverCulture set up a 501c(3) corporation?

No. RiverCulture has two Steering Committee members who operate 501c(3) organizations. These members will provide guidance if/when it is determined by the full RiverCulture Steering Committee that 501c(3) status is the right step for the program.

7. Possible typo in your narrative - in the second to last line, did you mean to say "... withOUT a substantial change ..."?

Typo confirmed

8. The transfer of ZBA-support responsibility from the Building Inspector to the Planner is labeled unofficial; will it become official, and reflected in job descriptions?

Absent a larger restructuring of the Planning and Building Departments, the intent is to hand this duty back over to the Building Inspector. This last year was big transition for the Building Department and ZBA so I was happy to help facilitate that transition by sharing some of the zoning duties while the Inspector got acclimated. I have helped reform ZBA procedures by having them adopt a new application package and fee schedule. Reform of the zoning bylaws will greatly help them function and hopefully minimize their workload. The ZBA should adopt formal rules and regulation in the near future. There is no doubt to me that that the community would benefit from a planner staffing the ZBA rather than a building official- regardless of who the individuals are (the professions simply bring a different skill set to bear). However, it is enough for me to know that the ZBA and Inspector truly value my opinion and counsel.

9. In view of the Narrative comment about staff time being a constraint on accomplishments, what will be left undone as a result of taking on the ZBA support task? Is there a movement toward changing the structure of the Planning function?

I do have a vision for how a streamlined development department could function. It would result in a) a more efficient use of time and resources b) a better, more consistent customer service experience and c) increased ability to effectively secure and manage grants. I have explored the idea with the Town Administrator and I have felt heard. However, I have not advanced the proposal because it involves restructuring of some existing positions which would be an admittedly long range effort.

I hesitate to link the Planner position to grants because it is not in the job description but it is a big part of what I do (and what the community needs) so here is an overview of the Planning Department's current grant portfolio:

Grant	Grant Amount	Status
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ABPP Battlefield Study Archeology Phase II	\$81,000	Received, in progress
Complete Streets FY20	\$311,00	received
Green Communities FY18	\$126,000	Closing out
MVP- Montague City road Flooding Design + Permitting	\$33,750	Received, in progress
DCR Rec Trails FY19- Millers Falls River Access	\$17,900	received
Safe Routes to School: Hillcrest, Sheffield, GFMS	\$589,147	Application pending
FY19 MassDevelopment Site Readiness- Canal District Infrastructure Plan	\$100,000	Application pending
FY19 MassDevelopment Brownfield Redevelopment Grant: asbestos removal as Strathmore	\$250,000	Application pending
Mass Downtown Initiative: Millers Falls Placemaking Plan	\$15,000	Application pending
Mass Cultural Council- Turners Falls Cultural District	\$5,000	received

*Not included CDBG grant, USFS Tree Grant, Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan, 3 META (Energy study) grants because my department does not directly manage but does support.*

The Planning Department is currently responsible for managing implementation of at least \$574,650 in grants. On top of that, almost \$1M in grants have been submitted and are pending approval. The Department is able to manage \$.5 M in grants in addition to two important “in-house” initiatives that have demanded the Planner’s time and attention: Zoning Bylaw Re-write and RiverCulture Transition. FY20 will be an even larger grant year if one or two of those big grants are landed. The Planning Department was able to apply for more grants for FY20 knowing I have support from the Cultural Coordinator. In the unlikely scenario that all pending grants are awarded we may need to make some tough choices about which projects to prioritize. In FY19 we had to sacrifice 40,000 from a Green Community grant that ran out of time due to lack of capacity to implement a project.

**INTERN**

The line item for a graduate level intern (\$4,000) was removed from the Planning budget in FY19 in a show of austerity in order to accommodate the Cultural Coordinator position. What I recently realized is that the projects that the FY18 Planning intern worked on that are now bearing fruit (over one year later). Here are concrete examples to demonstrate the value of an intern: The intern did the initial grunt work that allowed the town to enroll into the Complete Streets Program which has resulted in a \$311,000 grant for FY20. She also helped developed

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the new zoning map and provided critical research in support of the zoning bylaw rewrite that will hopefully be adopted in Feb 2019. In that sense, the intern is one of the best investments that my department has made. The intern position took time consuming tasks off my plate that allowed the department to do more projects like Complete Streets. I have no doubt that the Cultural Coordinator will (continue to) bear fruit as well however the Planning Intern will be better suited for land use, conservation, and economic development related aspects of the job. The intern would typically provide at least 15 hours/week for a 4 to 6 month period, although they typically do more for academic credit.

In FY20 the position would be helpful to help manage several ongoing grants (Such as Millers Falls River Access) or to help apply for others while I work on managing the current and pending grants. **I would very much appreciate if the Finance Committee and Select Board would entertain a request to restore \$4,000 in my budget for FY20 to support a graduate level planning intern.** (The budget request was amended on 1/28/19 to reflect this request – CO)

## 182-MEDIC

1. What is the status of MEDIC?

MEDIC meets on an as-needed basis, and at least once per year per state statute. They met twice in 2018. The group is burnt out on 38 Ave A frustration and now the prospect of redevelopment of that property is linked to an excruciatingly slow FERC relicensing process. I am trying to get the EDIC to retain their stake industrial development by having them take ownership of the 30+ year old signs in the Airport Industrial Park. This is a relatively small, easily accomplished project with real public/ economic development benefit.

2. Are they ever going to transfer ownership of 38 Avenue A to the town? Will they still need insurance after this point? Do they still meet?

38 Avenue A remains under a purchase and sale agreement to Crabapple Whitewater until May 30, 2019. The P+S was continued with the blessing from the Select Board in May 2018 That deal has yet to be completed because of significant delays in the FERC settlement negotiation process. I don't wish for this to happen, but if Crabapple falls through 38 Ave could be transferred to town. EDIC would not require an annual appropriation at that point.

3. Will the Planner generate a Special Article to transfer the asset to the Town — in which case, why another Insurance request, particularly if the Board does not meet?

A transfer to the town is not advisable with a Purchase and Sale agreement in place. See above answers.